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Un-entwining Monological Narratives of Change through Dramaturgical and Narrative Analyses

GEORGE CAIRNS[a],* and NIC BEECH[b]

[a]*Durham Business School, University of Durham, Mill Hill Lane, Durham DH1 3LB, UK;* [b]*University of Strathclyde Graduate School of Business, 199 Cathedral Street, Glasgow G4 0QU, UK*

The concept of a single reality view of social situations has been problematized and deconstructed in recent critical literature on organizations. However, much of the managerial literature promotes concepts and models of unity, and hence much managerial intent and action is still bounded by convergent and exclusive thinking, within a unified and unifying structure. In critically engaging with notions of unity and convergence in an organizational context, we seek to promote divergent thinking that accepts that organizational actors perceive multiple realities, and that these are not unstructured, but are framed by micro-level structures that are both constraining of, and constructed within these realities. We apply dramaturgical and narrative analyses to elucidate and elaborate organizational actors' complex realities of the experience of change through tracing and deconstructing the various narrative lines which were intertwined in monological accounts that predominated in the organizational situation from which our illustrations are drawn.

The illustrative examples for this paper are drawn from a series of longitudinal interventions within a large public sector organization, investigated through multi-methods including consultancy projects, structured and unstructured interviews, questionnaires and participant observation. The material drawn from the various interventions has been subject to reflection and critical examination over time and from a number of perspectives.

Key words: Multiple Realities, Micro-level Structure, Change, Power, Drama, Narrative Style

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we present our interpretations of two related change programs within part of a public sector agency, here referred to as Ersilia: a single location branch of a multi-location government agency. We do so in order to explore the multiple realities of thinking/acting of the different actor groups, and the micro-level structures at the social and organizational level within which this thinking/acting is set. Our interpretations are based upon critical reflection over time on our own and others' roles in a series of longitudinal interventions in the organization. The first program of change, to business processes, was driven at the macro-level by factors external to the location studied whilst the second, to the working environment, was initiated internally in parallel with, and in support of the first. During the 1980s and 1990s in the UK, successive Conservative governments sought to move thinking and acting in the public-sector away from 'traditional' values that were characterized by lack of market incentives and higher levels of bureaucratic rule and regulation than in private sector organizations (Meyer, 1982). Government sought to inculcate an approach that placed

*E-mail: g.m.cairns@durham.ac.uk

emphasis on responsiveness to consumers, improved performance, and revenue generation in line with the new public management vocabulary (Maor, 1999) and the drive towards debureaucratization (Savoie, 1994). Whereas public and private sector management might have been conceived historically as dichotomous in terms of stability/change, cost/revenue, bureaucracy/entrepreneurship (Rainey, 1983), research in the 1990s showed that this was no longer the case (Bozeman and Bretschneider, 1994). The change processes initiated in public administration as a result of this drive were, however, to a large extent rationally planned and directed at macro-level structure which was assumed to be unified, and unifying. Options generated by 'eruptive processes' (Finstad, 1998) within the organizational actors' context were largely ignored, or considered as problems rather than options.

We argue that the rational-logical approach to organizational change, and the dichotomous view of management that prevails in much of the managerial literature and its application to organizational analysis limits understanding of the complexity of the change process. We further argue that this literature presupposes a unified, and unifying macro-level structure, and a singular reality that militates against complex understanding of the micro-level structures and multiple realities that are socially constructed by the actors in the organizational setting. Our evidence suggests that within Ersilia, whilst senior managers sought to script and direct change according to one set of values, different sets of actors elected, either consciously or unconsciously, to view the 'reality' of the situation according to different frames of reference at different stages of the change programs. Also, that perceptions of reality were not fixed, but were 'floating' in time and space. Over the period of the study, each of the agency's sites dealt with specific areas of the business, with delegated responsibility for operational management and with input to overall strategy development. Throughout the period the organization struggled to cope with changes to its areas of business, with drives for a more private sector orientation, introduction of new technologies, and with pressures to reduce the cost of doing business.

REDUCING ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLEXITY THROUGH CONSTRUCTS OF SINGULAR REALITY AND UNIFIED STRUCTURE

Contemporary studies of organizations highlight the need for consideration of complexity and paradox (*e.g.*, Filby and Willmott, 1988; Hatch and Ehrlich, 1993; Thompson, 1998) and of the multiple realities (Beech and Cairns, 2001) generated by the thinking/acting of those within them. However, as Casti (1994) posits, complexity is recognized as existing not in itself, but only through its recognition by the observer in her own context of thinking/acting. We argue that within much of the managerial literature there is a tendency towards rejection of complexity and towards the establishment of singular conceptions of reality within a unified macro-level structure. Concepts such as shared vision (Hitt *et al.*, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Fowles and Edwards, 1999; Richbell and Ratsiatou, 1999) and cohesion (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Mbaatyo, 2001) are promoted, along with an emphasis upon the setting of clear goals and objectives (Rumelt, 1987; Herbig and O'Hara, 1995; Kamarck, 1997). The drive is for uniform meaning generation and interpretation (Hedberg, 1981; Kim, 1993) across all organizational actors in search of the singular reality, where 'the primary task of management is . . . to construct a discourse of corporate coherence' (Araujo and Easton, 1996: 371), of the unified structure.

We would argue that the discourses of a singular reality and of a unified structure are based upon processes of selection and exclusion, and on binary-oppositional and dichotomous thinking in which the 'right' and the 'good' solutions are preferred, and other options are by default classified as 'wrong' or 'bad'. On the basis of our interventions in Ersilia and our

reflections on these, we argue that there is no singular reality, or set of oppositional realities to be conceived or perceived dichotomously, that there is no singular unifying structure, and that there is no set of rational reductive solutions to the problems of management. We construct a narrative that suggests that there are multiple realities of different 'rights' and 'goods' existing in parallel within organizational space and time. We further suggest that, whilst these multiple realities cannot be seen as existing within a unified structure, neither do they exist in a state of un-structure. We highlight failure to address these different realities and the micro-level structures in which they are set at different stages of the program of change. On the basis of our reflections, we suggest that, in seeking change, management must take account of the inconsistent and divergent views of different sets of actors, must seek to understand the micro-level social and organizational structures that frame the belief and value systems of these different groups, and must seek to maintain and to make sense of a range of multiple realities if it is to elicit solutions that will fit with these different belief and value systems.

However, the arguments against single realities and unified structure in organizations may also be applied to the field of organization studies (Daft and Lewin, 1990), where the validity of reductive epistemologies (Bruner, 1986) that assume a direct linkage between sign and signified, and a singular underlying reality (Ross, 1949) have been questioned. In accepting that our understanding of the complexity of organizations is always grounded in the narratives that we construct about them (Tsoukos and Hatch, 2001), we seek to construct a narrative that will enable organization actors themselves to make sense of, and to cope with complexity and ambiguity. In this, we support the notion that the role of management is to support the different 'sensemaking' (Dunford and Jones, 2000) of the different actors and groups of actors.

Putnam (1981) has argued that meaning is created not only by the intentions of the person who sends a message, but also, and potentially more so, by the perceiver of the message. Wittgenstein (1958) has argued that such meaning-making occurs within language-games within which participants follow rules for interpretation. Signs may exist without singular signifieds, and may inspire divergent interpretations in different language games. It has also been argued that the social processes through which realities are constituted are not power-neutral. Nietzsche argues that 'reality' is mere interpretation, constructed by those who wish to be master of it, where '(i)t is our needs that interpret the world' (Nietzsche, 1968: 267). Similarly, Foucault (1974, 1980) explores the taxonomic functions of language in dividing reality into knowable units, which, once rendered as such, are also subject to the operations of power. This may be further emphasized in situations of social change (Beech and Cairns, 2001).

If one accepts arguments for multiple social realities, and their power-embeddedness, the value of monological forms of analysis is called into question. As Flyvbjerg (1998) argues, the 'rationality' of analysis of any situation may not represent any form of 'truth'. Rather the outcomes may be derived from a process of rationalization in order to derive meaning that suits the expedient needs of those who hold power in the particular context of interpretation and action. Here, 'power concerns itself with defining reality rather than discovering what reality "really" is . . . This is not to imply that power seeks out rationality and knowledge *because* rationality and knowledge are power. Rather, power *defines* what counts as rationality and knowledge and thereby what counts as reality' (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 227, italics in original). Dramaturgical analysis offers an alternative to monological accounts, and in doing so it may be more suited to presenting the complexity of changing social situations. It can seek to give voice to divergent and even contradictory participants/groups.

It must be acknowledged that both authors of and actors within organizational drama, in creating their multiple socially constructed realities, operate with intentionality and

unintentionality, and with a lack of power-neutrality. We would not argue that dramaturgical analysis can remove these factors, rather it can seek to make them overt, to surface the micro-level structures that are both constraining of and constructed within these multiple realities. To this end, we as authors of this text appear in the drama along with the organizational actors/authors. Further, we acknowledge that authors are not in full control of the text (Barthes, 1981) and that readers (if any) will intentionally and unintentionally re-represent the text in their own meaning-making processes. Dramaturgical analysis can acknowledge this through focusing not only on what occurs 'centre stage', but also in representing what happens back stage and in the audience (Goffman, 1990), accepting that participants will change roles from lead to support to audience as different lines of narrative intertwine. In this way, the reader is presented with multiple storylines with which and from which to construct their own meaning.

EXPLORING MICRO-LEVEL STRUCTURES—COMBINING NARRATIVE AND DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

If we accept the above arguments, then reality and knowledge/representation of reality are not distinct, and further, representation is not uni-linear, but is multi-layered and dependent on the context of the perceiver. One way of conceptualising this state of affairs is through the use of a dramaturgical analysis (Mangham and Overington, 1987; Mangham, 1990; Goffman, 1990). In Ersilia, we will show that the change process design was initiated by one set of 'performers'—senior management—at a time when the workforce in general were not involved—they could be considered as the 'queuing audience'. This can be compared to Alvesson's (1994) notion that 'symbolic resources' are developed 'back stage' (Goffman, 1990) where the 'audience' are excluded from the actors. Such resources are then utilized in performance in which the audience is active perceivers. The generation of symbols back stage is analogous to the power and knowledge structures, and the social formulation which imbue actions with meaning. In the context of managing change, however, the audience should not be conceived as passive, and 'performers' should not be equated with 'managers'. Within Ersilia, rather than devising a monological analysis, we seek to surface multiple contextual realities that relate to a variety of scripted and unscripted plots, to the various intentions of actors, critics and audience, and that require acknowledgement that roles are not fixed, but can be taken by different participants and can change over time and in different 'readings' of circumstances.

This approach is in line with that of Boje (1995, 1991) in seeking to uncover the micro-structures of plurivocal narratives within the organizational drama. The dramaturgical approach adopts a relational perspective (Bakhtin, 1984; Schutz, 1970) in which the realities people conceive are fundamentally based on relationships to others. Such relationships are revealed through narrative analysis which explores the interactive nature of roles (such as hero, rescuer, rescued and bystander). These roles, however, are not regarded as static. Rather they are performative (Gergen, 1999) in that they have implications for the limits and possibilities of action (*e.g.*, heroes cannot fail). However, adopting a plurivocal narrative analysis (Boje, 1995) means that when traced through from different perspectives, the nature (and hence the performative possibilities) of actors alter. For example, the hero in one narrative line can be anti-hero or even bystander in another. Similarly, the plot structures (Propp, 1975) vary with the different perspectives to the extent that different acts may be regarded as initiating, following, central or marginal, and what may be a scene in one narrative line may be an interval in another. In adopting this style of analysis we are not seeking to reify underlying

structures, but are using micro-level structures to illuminate centrality/marginality and voice/no-voice (Boje, 1995) as key features of focused and unfocused framed interactions (Goffman, 1961).

In the analysis we apply a typology of narrative styles that includes the epic/heroic, tragic, romantic and ironic (Jeffcutt, 1993, 1994; Beech, 2000) and comedic. The styles are indicative of different cognitive frameworks, and have implications for expectations and action (Czarniawska, 1997). In the epic/heroic style there is an expectation of purposeful action and desirable end states. In the tragic style the expectation is that action will be foiled and that undesirable end states will pervade. In the romantic style there is a belief that despite initial bad outcomes, in the end things will work out. In the ironic style there is a state of detachment from the group or system. In the comedic style there is an expectation that normal roles will be altered and norms will be broken to some extent. Clearly, when actors from one style engage with actors from another there is the potential for multiple realities either meeting or 'passing' each other.

Our approach here is to use narrative analysis in order to reveal micro-level structures which are dramaturgically realized in practice. In discussing illustrative examples from Ersilia, we seek to unpick some of the roles, scripts, styles and critical meanings. In so doing, we seek to understand better how the various narrative lines are intertwined, how they perceive themselves and others, and what some of the impacts of this are.

INTERACTING WITH AND WITHIN ERSILIA

Our illustration of change within Ersilia is based upon our critical reflection upon a series of interventions that provided interaction with the organizational actors over a period of some 5 years. The initial intervention involved one of us as part of a consultancy team commissioned to undertake a review and redesign of the workspace, working within a presupposed macro-level structure and single organizational reality frame. The interaction here was primarily with senior management at the site and business unit levels in order to inform change design. In later interventions, in the capacity of academic researchers, the interactions were intended to promote critical reflection on the change process. These were not concerned only with senior management and their perceptions and beliefs, but involved direct interaction with organizational actors at all levels of the hierarchy, and with other members of the original external consultancy group. These interventions were specifically designed to elicit organizational actors' perceptions of their multiple realities of the change processes, and to explore the micro-level social and organizational structures that were constraining of, and constructed within these realities. As such, the interventions were not designed as a research investigation, framed within a body of 'pure' knowledge in which 'mapping (would be) cumulative, largely dictated by the linear and logical development of an academic agenda' (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998: 344). Rather, we were concerned with the pragmatic, context-specific relevance of the understandings that were generated at the time, so that we might draw some context-specific conclusions and, hopefully, contribute to generation of theory for general application. The approach was underpinned by our belief that, if we 'imagine a world where cultures are well defined and strictly separated and where scientific terms have finally been nailed down, . . . only miracles or revelation could reform our cosmology' (Feyerabend, 1993: 272). So, we use records and transcripts of various forms of organizational intervention in order to illustrate key points of discussion in relation to the philosophical argument.

The reflective interventions took various formats, with information and opinion collection carried out in a number of ways, using techniques of:

- Focus groups—in which representative groups were given the opportunity to raise, discuss and analyze their own perceptions and justifications of the change process;
- Interviews—in which the motivations, perceptions, beliefs, etc. of key members of the change teams were discussed and analyzed on a one-to-one basis;
- Observation—of organizational actors in the change process.

Multiple forms of intervention were used with all levels of employee within the organizations, including senior management and administrative staff. Issues surfaced from initial inquiry within each group were subject to elaboration and in-depth discussion across groups in later sessions.

The use of these multiple approaches to interaction enabled us to probe issues, seeking contextual understanding of the phenomena expressed by the participants, prior to inductive generation of concepts (Silverman, 1993) for wider consideration.

SCRIPT AND PRESCRIPTION FOR CHANGE IN ERSILIA

In what is presented below, the intention is to represent the polyphonic lines of narrative (Barry and Elmes, 1997) of different actor voices occurring simultaneously by use of columns. This is done in order to disrupt some of the linear (and privileging) ordering (Burrell, 1997) that occurs in efforts to write according to convention.

Ersilia is an organization within the 'ugly duckling' (Czarniawska-Joerges and Jacobsson, 1995) area of public administration: a government agency that manages public sector borrowing through private citizens' investment, savings, and bond purchase. It is a multi-location organization that has undergone extensive change in recent times. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s it saw its markets opened up to increased competition through reduced regulation of the private sector banking industry, and it saw its 'traditional' paper-based work processes challenged by the introduction of new IT systems. During this period, executives of the agency saw the need to become more market-oriented, more customer-focused, and to reduce the costs of doing business in general. Change at the single site under consideration here was driven by a new and charismatic leader (Gardner and Avolio, 1998) who sought to engender culture change as a lever for employee involvement in and commitment to the change program.

Scripted improvisation in organizational change	*Prescriptive change in organizational set design*
Within the particular location that was subject of this study, the new CEO first instilled in senior management a view that change should be an interactive and integrative process, with genuine involvement of all levels of employee. Senior management saw their role as that of managing people and developing strategy, with staff themselves being responsible for managing processes of delivery. They wished to move away from a culture of 'supervision by watching to management by supporting'	At the same time as the work processes were being redesigned, senior management brought in external consultants to redesign the physical environment. This was where we had initial contact with the organization. A new workspace design was sought, to be implemented in support of new ways of working and to counteract years of ad hoc 'planning' that had led to huge inequalities in space allocation, and to the construction of 'Berlin walls' of storage units around departmental territorial boundaries.

[CEO]. This would have a major impact on the role of middle management in particular, being asked to integrate with their teams and work with them on the new IT systems, rather than sitting apart at the head of rows of 'paper pushers' [middle manager]. It is noteworthy, however, that this intent to involve was not itself generated by a process of involvement—the workforce desire for involvement was taken as read. In order to implement this new approach senior management first sought suggestions from staff on how business processes might be changed, that led to literally thousands of submissions from the 1700 staff on ideas for change. Most were, however, fairly low-grade ideas, which was not surprising from a workforce of administrative staff who had never been asked for an opinion on work design previously. During this process of idea generation middle management felt excluded, since the communication of ideas was direct from staff to senior management. With a staff to middle manager ratio of about 20:1, middle managers' ideas were vastly outnumbered by those from administrative staff. They were aware of the changing nature of their role, but felt dis-empowered in both the design and implementation of it. Whilst some departments sat 'in each other's laps' others could literally 'play football in the empty space'. The space design process was carried out in consultation with senior management, but due to the numbers involved there was no direct consultation with middle management and administrative grades. This happened even although the change was intended to support the latter group's re-categorization from directed implementers of standard paper-based systems to being self-managing telephone and IT-supported points of direct customer contact. The new space planning provided uniformity of workspace design and layout across the teams and departments, and eliminated the middle management workplace at the head of rows. Middle managers would now sit within the team layout at any available desk. In addition, the new design removed physical departmental boundaries, in order to permit fluid expansion and contraction to meet changing business needs without the need for movement of furniture. Following the limited consultations, major redesign of one floor of the building was agreed and was implemented over one weekend. On the Monday morning, about 400 staff were directed to their new workspace, with all their personal belongings already in place for them. In the spatial change program, as with the business process change, middle managers felt excluded from discussion and hence from power and decision making yet, with their loss of positional hierarchy, they might be viewed as being the most affected by it.

Organizational Actors' Self-perception as Audience

Employee response to both of the above change initiatives was not as expected by senior management—and to the space change, not as expected by the external consultant. Since management was unable to process, let alone act on, the number of ideas submitted by staff for business process change, the majority of suggestions were subject to no response or feedback. This led to staff perceiving themselves as mere pawns in some managerial game, asked for their views that were then ignored, 'given only good news' [middle manager] by the organization and 'kept in the dark about real intentions—there (would) probably be lots of redundancies' [admin. worker]. In relation to the spatial redesign, staff saw themselves again as subjects of action and decision-making by others, with the 'expert'-designed

solution to problems of inequality of space provision, poor circulation definition and inefficient layouts being criticized as impractical and not supporting users' real needs. Staff who moved from one end of the open plan space to the other complained of moving from where 'it was always comfortable' to where 'it (was) freezing cold and draughty' [admin. workers]. Those who moved the opposite way complained of the excessive heat in their new location!

Re-appraising Roles and Performance

The outcome of both the business process and space change programs was that, whilst senior management had perceived themselves as empowering staff and demonstrating their belief in the staff's commitment to the organization, staff perceived themselves as disempowered, and they disbelieved management's expressions of belief in their commitment. The external design consultants who had viewed themselves as experts and deliverers of an ideal solution, were perceived by staff as irrelevant to the organization and as deliverers of added confusion. At this stage it was apparent that senior management, external consultants and administrative staff held beliefs in different forms of organizational 'reality', whilst middle managers felt excluded from any consideration of what reality might be. Also, it was apparent that, whilst there was no unified or unifying structure that framed these different realities, neither was there a complete lack of structure. Rather, the different groups' thinking/acting was framed by a number of varying and variable micro-level structures.

From scripted to structured improvisation . . .

During a period of reappraisal of progress to date—a period in which we had no contact with the organization—senior management of Ersilia critically engaged with the problems that existed in both change programs and determined to take corrective action. In relation to business process change, they initiated a program of small group working on ideas within departments. The ideas generated were analyzed at the local level, further developed into integrated sets of change initiatives, then cascaded up to senior management as fully developed business cases. On the basis of these ideas major change to work processes; including self-determination of working hours, holiday allocation, and work sharing amongst team members; was implemented on a voluntary basis in 2 of 4 similar teams within a single department. One aspect of change that

. . . in an adaptive setting

Simultaneous to the process changes, all teams working on the floor that had been designed by the external consultants were allowed to redesign their workspace layouts. Following completion of this process staff perceived the external consultants' input as having been largely irrelevant, and considered themselves as having subverted the spatial design concepts to meet their own needs. This, despite the fact that their redesign had to be done within a set of minimum non-negotiable constraints set out by senior management. These were drawn directly from the design strategy that the consultants had derived in order to maintain principles of equality, clarity and safety that had not previously existed. Returning to the organization after a gap of some two years, one of the consultants, however, saw staff as having taken the strategic definition of the

was implemented in this program was that of extension of the working day, with staff proposing extension of the hours of operation both in the mornings and evenings. Members would then negotiate working hours within the team on a core hours and flexi-time basis, but with the need for coverage of the total working day. Such an extension of working hours had been proposed by management several years earlier and had been rejected out of hand by staff and unions.

'limits of the possible' and molded it to suit their own needs. In one particular instance, staff had departed from the consultants' 'useless layout that didn't suit (the users)' [admin. worker to consultant] in order to redesign the workplace several times over a period of months, and to arrive at almost exactly the same design as originally produced by the consultants, and put in place over the infamous change weekend.

Re-appraising Organizational Performance

As a result of this second iteration of change initiatives, the administrative staff in particular reconstructed their perceptions of themselves and others. They now saw themselves as valued members of the organization with 'expert power' (French and Raven, 1959) over their own work process and workplace design and they saw management as 'good guys' with whom they could work collaboratively in future. They themselves set up expectations that they would 'never have to return to the old times again' [admin. worker in presentation to top management team in London]. Over a period of time both quantitative and qualitative assessment was undertaken of work output, absenteeism and levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction amongst the workforce. On all counts the new change programs were seen to be successful.

In the period that followed our interventions, Ersilia underwent further radical change, with numbers of staff reduced dramatically and with many elements of its activity outsourced to private sector companies. Some of the principles of the change programs have survived whilst others have been superseded.

THE DRAMAS OF ERSILIA

Using the vehicle of dramaturgical analysis, we now seek to explore the emergent themes of roles, action/response, behavioral style and intent/accident that can be surfaced from critical reflection on our records of the various interventions. We have related these themes to the categorizations shown below (Figures 1, 2 and 3) of actor, actions, plot style and script. In so doing we seek to understand the micro-level social and organizational structures at different stages of the change programs, and to determine how each group perceived the 'reality' of their own situation. Within Ersilia, there is evidence of a lack of unitary perception of what counts as 'reality' across groups of actors, and of change to these different perceptions over time. In both the work process and workplace change programs, the early stages might be characterized as demonstrating different reality sets, in that actors conceived themselves and perceived their situation according to different sets of values and beliefs, and by application of different measures of success or failure. The categorization of these perceptions might be summarized as follows (Figure 1):

Act/Scene/Title	Actor	Actions	Plot Style	Script?
Act I, Scene i—The Changing Nature of Work	Senior Management	Originators of plot and script outline.	Heroic	Yes
	Administrative Staff	Initial enthusiasm and participation. Lack of direction from stage.	Romantic first, then tragic	Yes, but different
	Middle Management	Unenthusiastic participation. Being 'done to them'. Give up boxes and go to auditorium.	Black comedy	Yes
Act I, Scene ii—The Changing Setting of Work	Senior Management	Producers. Commissioning and rewarding.	Heroic	Yes
	Administrative Staff	Done to them against wishes.	Tragi-comedy	Yes
	Middle Management	Done to them—with cruelty.	Black comedy	Yes
	External Consultants	Script writers, designers and directors.	Heroic	Yes

FIGURE 1

These early stages and the outcomes of the first iteration of change were characterized by senior management as moving from a public to a private sector mindset, seeking to establish parameters of employee empowerment, market economics and customer orientation as key. The apparent negative responses from employees cannot, however, be held to be demonstrative of rejection of these beliefs and values *per se*. Administrative staff participated in the first process change program with initial enthusiasm, providing large amounts of input in the form of suggestions to support change, but saw little or no response from management in the form of implementation. As a result, staff saw themselves as subjects rather than players, and believed that the 'participation' had been a paper exercise that served some higher level political purpose. Here, we would propose that staff perceived the managerial 'reality' as remaining embedded within a rationalist public sector structure of Taylorist bureaucratic control, political economics and organization orientation as key. This was obviously not the intended outcome from a senior management perspective.

In relation to the first round of changes to the physical environment, senior management's approach was based upon a private sector mindset, breaking down the formal physical structures to provide a workplace that would be 'more responsive to ever-changing teams of intelligent and demanding end-users' (Duffy, 1997: 51). The appointed external consultants saw themselves as the 'heroic' change agents (Beech, 2000) who would turn the vision into reality for the benefit of the staff. In relation to the unexpected—by senior management and consultants—unenthusiastic response to this change, it might be suggested that the staff's mindset remained fixed in a public sector mode, in that it accorded with the paradigm that the physical setting can be positively changed in the private sector but, that 'such changes in the public sector can readily have negative consequences' (Robertson and Seneviratne, 1995: 552). However, as Mangham and Overington (1987: 124) highlight, the physical setting of organizational drama is one of multiple realities, 'designed to express order and control as well as flexibility and change'. The clarity and lack of clutter of the new space might be seen as offering less formal structure and improved working conditions by those that designed it,

Act/Scene/Title	Actor	Actions	Plot Style	Script?
Interval	Senior Management	Re-wrote plot outline based on critical review of Act 1. Redesigned theater. Reconceived the nature of drama.	Heroic	Yes(-ish)
	Administrative Staff	Shared critical review with Senior Management.	Romantic	No
	Middle Management	Fragmented and marginalized.	Tragic	No
	External Consultant	Reflected on Act 1 ending.	Tragic	No

FIGURE 2

but it may be viewed as adding a new unifying structure and reducing privacy and the right to individuality by those that occupied it.

The differences that were to be found between the actions, inputs and outcomes of the first and second iteration of change programs must be attributed in part to the period of critical reflection that took place in between. Senior management both stood back from their own actions and engaged with them in a critical manner, and also succeeded in re-engaging with the administrative staff, in particular, over their withdrawal and skepticism in the latter stages of the first round of change. Middle management, however, appears to have been largely left out of the reflection process. The nature of this period of reflection might be summarized as follows (Figure 2):

Following the second round of organizational changes within Ersilia, it was seen that there was a degree of commonality of perception between groups of actors on some issues. There was alignment between senior and remaining middle management and staff over the reduction in levels of supervision, and over greater self-direction of the work processes at the individual level. There were, however, key issues, such as those of working hours and origination of the spatial design that were not conceived or perceived within the same 'reality' frame. These issues were not represented by degrees of value along a singular dichotomous scale, let alone as unitary patterns of belief and value. Senior management were delighted that the working day had been extended since many of the customers who were now making contact by telephone rather than by post were, themselves, working during the 'normal' day and wished to make contact in the early morning or evening. The extension of hours that was initiated by staff in order to suit parents within their own group with child-care requirements was certainly not, however, equated by them with the 'request' for such an extension that had come from management a few years earlier, and that had been rejected out of hand by staff and unions.

The staff's redesign of the physical space in order to arrive at a previously implemented consultant-designed layout might be considered to be a simple case of them checking the validity of the original proposal. They did not, however, acknowledge this similarity let alone accord any credit to the consultants for its conceptualization. Some of the consultants themselves appeared to consider their role as being of an even more heroic stature in this round of change, in that they considered themselves to have enabled the staff to 'see the light' and to self-design layouts that 'they could never have dreamed of before' [external consultant]. Due to the staff group's failure to acknowledge any similarity between the consultants' design and their own we would suggest that the near-identical physical solutions to the 'problem' represent very different solutions to different psycho-physiological problems to those actor sets involved.

Act/Scene/Title	Actor	Actions	Plot Style	Script?
Act II, Scene i— Changing the Nature of Work	Senior Management	Coaching and supporting.	Heroic	Yes(-ish)
	Administrative Staff	Plot infill and dialogue development.	Heroic/romantic	Yes—by selves
	Middle Management	Leave, or join staff group.	Tragic	Yes—by others
	External Consultant	Remote audience.		
Act II, Scene i— Changing the Setting of Work	Senior Management	Defined auditorium, then moved into audience	None	No
	Administrative Staff	Improvisation and experimentation. No acknowledgement of consultants role.	Heroic	Carrying basic plot from Act I, Scene ii
	Middle Management	Those remaining work with staff.	Heroic	As above
	External Consultant	Audience to administrative staff.	anti-Heroic	Partial

FIGURE 3

The following (Figure 3) shows how the changing nature of the roles, actions and relations of the different groups might be summarized for the second iteration of change:

Interpretation of the issues raised in the change programs within Ersilia, based upon the managerial literature, might set public/private orientations against each other as dichotomous conflicting value and belief sets to be analyzed in relation to each other. The evidence of the interventions and the nature of the actors' perceptions indicate that this would be a simplistic interpretation. The nature of the roles, actions, interpretations and behaviors of the different groups, and the way in which these changed over time requires consideration of the existence of multiple types and levels of 'reality', and of the multiple micro-level structures that frame them. Senior management cannot be conceived as originators, directors or controllers of action, nor can they be conceived within a unitary 'private sector' mindset orientation. Similarly, staff cannot be conceived as subjects of, or as unwilling participants in the change process. Rather, they were willing participants who saw their opinions and contributions rejected in the first round of change. Neither group can be viewed as having set up or supported dichotomous conflict within a single reality framework. On the other hand, middle management might be conceived as 'floating' in a state of 'no-such-thing-as-reality' (Beech and Cairns, 2001), dispossessed of their roles and no longer able to operate (Mangham and Overington, 1987).

REVIEWING A RANGE OF PERFORMANCES

In reviewing the performances represented here, we support Goffman's (1986) notion that there is only a 'loose-coupling' relationship between 'macro-structure' and interaction. In Goffman's reading of this relationship, the framings of the encounter—for example, physical space and shared definitions of the social situation—are held to be qualitatively different from the micro-interactions which construct and are constructed by the framing. Such qualitative distinctions also exist in other literatures. For example, in some views of culture (e.g., Schein, 1985) the basic assumptions are of a different nature to the artifacts that represent them. However, we would argue that, in this setting and possibly in others,

macro-structures are not qualitatively different in nature to micro-structures, rather they differ only in the degree of power and dominance exerted by players over audience, and the dependent construction of who are players and who are audience at any point in time. The macro-structure, like the micro-structures, is a story, but is a reductionist story of 'the organization' or 'the problem', which reifies a particular way of understanding. We would suggest that there is, at best, a loose coupling relationship between macro-structure and micro-structure within the multiple realities of organizational performance, in which both are mere appearances (Beech and Cairns, 2001), If this is the case, then the relationship between 'macro' structure of the organizational drama and the 'micro' structure of the actor-narratives is one of power connections between narratives that sit alongside each other, rather than being hierarchically arranged. Both kinds of narrative have symbolic representation in the culture, or 'appearances'. The difference is that one version is heard more loudly than the other; it is not that one represents underlying reality and the micro-narratives are mere appearances. They are all appearances that may represent divergent realities.

At this point, we would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of previous versions of this paper. Convention has it that such thanks should be expressed in a footnote, but the implication of that is to underplay the role of reviewer as author/influencer. We would like to use this as an example of the interplay of narratives whilst displaying the impact on our narrative of the reviewers' inputs. One of the reviewers commented that 'the plot of the story is well known to any scholar in organization studies: an early attempt initiated by top management without consultation, a failure, a second try.' Structure of the organizational narrative which frames the interactions in a particular way is in effect a macro-structure of the organization which is reductionist and which frames subsequent interactions in a particular way. It frames the story as a singular heroic/epic narrative. However, the co-present text is of the enterprise of organization studies in which novel explanation is privileged. We would argue that the reviewer's narrative fails to adequately describe the situation, and is actually an example of new data being fitted into a pre-existing frame. One of the reasons for this might be the structure of reviewing, which requires concise analysis leading to particular judgement. So, in the same way that reviewers of plays frequently have to state what 'the real' story is, so there is a narrative imperative on the academic reviewer to reduce to the pre-known as a basis for judgement making. The reasons we think that this is a misrepresentation of 'the organization story' are that, first, what appears to be unified states of the organization may actually be coincidences of micro-narratives at points in time when they are not oppositional, rather than actually being 'states of the organization'. Second, unless one accesses the micro-structures it is not possible to have an adequate explanation of what has been occurring. So, what looks like a singular journey to the reviewer, we would argue is a macro-structure of organization studies scholarship practices which to some extent disguise multiple lines of micro-structure, and which assume close-coupling of these, when there may in fact be degrees of loose coupling, if not uncoupling.

In order to unpack this, we will look at the relationship between the reviewer's macro-narrative and the micro-narratives of groups of actors in the situation. In the figure (Figure 4) the three phases of the macro-narrative are used to frame our readings of the groups' micro-narratives. What this indicates is that, whilst the macro-narrative is not without supporting evidence, it privileges some data over others and, whilst this is quite natural, it becomes problematic once power is accrued to the macro-narrative.

The reviewer's macro-narrative is imposition-fail-second try. Senior management's narrative is of consistently doing the same thing; of promoting involvement and improving the environment, and of a gradual move over time from low involvement and poor environment to high involvement and a good environment. In other words, consistency of

Macro-Narrative	Impose	Fail	Try again
Senior Management	Seek involvement of others	→————————————————————————————————→	
Administrative Staff	Desire involvement	Disappointment on process change Rejection of environment change	Take control and drive involvement in both arenas, then play back to other audiences
Middle Management	Imposition—of ideas by administrative staff, and of environmental design by consultants	Give up and leave or Give in and stay or Join in and stay (small minority)	Be involved or Seek involvement
Consultant	Design as a process of imposed involvement	Perceived failure, to be investigated or Perceived failure of users to appreciate	Review and rewrite as a different success or Move on to next project

FIGURE 4

action has led to gradual improvement. Administrative staff's narrative is, firstly, one of desire to be involved and active involvement, producing thousands of ideas. There is then a phase of them feeling that they are pawns in some management game. Following that, they acted in an involved way, taking control of both of the business processes and the environment. They subsequently displayed their successes to various audiences. Middle management's narrative starts with senior management making a change that enables the administrative staff to impose their will upon them. Over time, this narrative splits into people who give up and leave, people who give in and stay, and people who join in and participate. The consultants' narratives start with alignment of intentions to involve, a design process that is impositional, a perceived failure. Following this, there is a split in this narrative, in which some members leave the performance, whilst another ultimately revisits and rewrites it as a success. Hence, even a reading at the level of functional groups overplays consistency in the narratives.

How can we explain the authoring of the reviewer's macro-narrative? Phase 1, of imposition, is partially supported by the way we, as authors, have constructed our narrative, which explains that 'this intent to involve was not itself generated by a process of involvement', and how middle managers felt excluded from involvement. But the imposition upon them was not one of control by senior management, but of ideas by administrative staff, those that they 'managed'. The consultants' narrative tells of a form of imposition by them, but it is an 'imposition of democracy'. Aside from these complex impositions, there is, however, no obvious support for the notion of imposition from the narratives of senior management or administrative staff.

Phase 2, of failure, is again partially supported, by the administrative staff's and the consultants' narratives of rejection of the environmental change, and by middle manage-ment's majority view of exclusion and alienation. However, administrative staff and senior management did not see this as a period of failure. Whilst there are feelings of disappointment amongst administrative staff about the lack of change from their suggestions, this was not perceived as failure. Rather, a new narrative was invented, in which they presented themselves as pawns in some management game—a game which they probably saw as succeeding according to senior management's agenda. Senior management's narrative is one of surprise, reflection and re-grouping, but not of failure.

Finally, Phase 3, of trying again, is partially supported by the narratives of senior management (but without a break from the first attempt), administrative staff, and some middle management. However, a number of the latter group saw this phase as one, not of trying, but of being 'done to by others'. Within the consultant team, there is one narrative of the majority group, who move onto the next project, with this one seen as a failure of the users to appreciate what has been done for them. There is a further narrative of the consultant-turned organizational theorist, who wants to try for the first time to understand how the organizational actors perceive their own performances, and how they construct their own narratives.

So, the macro-narrative and macro-structure of the organization studies reviewer is not a frame, or front for the other narratives. Neither is it qualitatively different from them. Rather, it is but one narrative amongst many, sitting alongside the micro-narratives, but privileged within a particular frame of the administrative staff. However, it is likely that their narrative would be privileged, becoming the macro-narrative by which they might, erroneously we would posit, frame all other language-games.

Within our narrative, as authors of this text, the dramaturgical analysis might be conceived as the macro-narrative; the macro-structure; with the separate narrative analyses being the micro-narratives that frame a set of inter-related, but differentiated micro-structures. Again, the macro-narrative does not frame, or front the micro-narratives, but sits alongside them as part of a set of related understandings of a complex and ambiguous set of organizational realities.

This reading of dramaturgical and narrative analysis holds them to be complementary approaches that are ways of exploring the power that defines reality (Flyvbjerg, 1998). The micro-structure narratives are multi-authored (Boje, 1991; Barthes, 1981) and are loosely connected to macro-dramaturgical framings (Goffman, 1986, 1990). We would contend that the connections, in as far as they exist, are not hierarchical and structural, but are power relations that are configured according to the language-game (Wittgenstein, 1958). So as the language-game changes between managerial practice, administrative experience and academic writing, the micro-narratives become reconfigured such that different readings become taken-for-granted.

For managers in the organizational setting, we would suggest that our approach offers a way of understanding that is not exclusive, or reductive, but is not fragmented to the point of nihilism. In order to start to make sense of organizational complexity in a non-reductive and non-privileged way, we suggest that managers should start to think about the totality of the organization by first critically reflecting on their own macro-narrative, and on the power accrued to it. Then, by listening to the range of micro-narratives of other groups and setting them alongside their own macro-narrative, they can seek to surface the broad set of appearances that front the range of assumptions, of 'worlds-behind-the-scenes' (Beech and Cairns, 2001), that will enable in-depth, contextual understanding of the multiple realities of organizational life.

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